

UNIVERSIDAD  
**Piloto**  
DE COLOMBIA

# INSTITUTIONAL BOOKLET





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## Institutional Booklet

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2016

Bogotá, Colombia

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**Cover Design and Layout Design**

Department of Publications and Graphic Communication of the Universidad Piloto de Colombia

Photographs are from the personal archive of the Founders

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**Printing**



**Relaciones  
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THE UNIVERSITY  
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# THE BEGINNING





## HISTORY

### PILOTO UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBIA

A Space for Evolution

A morning of August 1962, over a hundred students flocked into Bogotá's National Park and invaded the lawn. Unhappy with the way classes were taught and how the Faculty of Architecture was being managed, they decided to leave the higher education institution where they had studied until then, with the purpose of creating their own university. In the open air and unsure about what should be done, they discussed the options they faced as a result of their decision. Luckily, a few hours after the meeting had begun, the National Park Theatre became the university's first official headquarters. A few days after this first gathering, newspapers were already covering the news of the birth of a new university, conceived by and for students.

Within the following days, architects, professors, and students from other universities came to support this initiative by contributing with their own work. With less than two months of management, the founders had already obtained, from the Capitol, the approval of the bylaws that would grant legal life to the corporation. Not even a year after the university's creation, representatives of the new institution were presenting its educational proposal and style of work at international conferences.

But, how did the creation of the Piloto University of Colombia (UPC) happen?

The efficiency of these events was most certainly due to the inspirational historical background of the sixties and seventies. Behind the scenes of the university's foundation we can find other anonymous young predecessors that were also moved by the modern dream of changing the world.

The coincidence of these events is not surprising. In 1960, architecture students from the National University went on a general strike motivated by their dissatisfaction with their professors' academic level and the faltering teaching method used in their Workshop sessions. Two years later, both scenario and actors were different yet similar the demands: architecture students of the University of America voiced their petitions. Upon the lack of response, they decided to definitely withdraw from the institution and create the *Escuela Piloto*.

The creation of the Piloto University of Colombia is one of the many paths taken by the libertarian thought of those years: the gathering of young people around the idea of creating their own School of Architecture, based on social consciousness and on an affective and respectful pedagogy towards students, is part of the range of proposals that the sixties' generation contributed to the thought of those days. Today, the Piloto University trains architects, engineers, economists, accountants, managers, designers, and psychologists; its Master's Degree Program in Urban Planning is one of the oldest in the country. It is a school that resulted from the struggle of members of said generation, who can now bear witness to the uncertainties, doubts, successes and failures that went along with the experience of living in dreamlike times.

## A NEW UNIVERSITY FOR A NEW COUNTRY

In less than two years – from 1960 to 1962 –, architecture students of both the National University and the University of America abandoned the classrooms where, among other courses, the Architecture Workshop was taught. The reason behind this action was that they disagreed with the way in which its study methodology was conveyed. There is no record of communications between the students of these two universities that may suggest the existence of any type of trade union or political agreement between them.

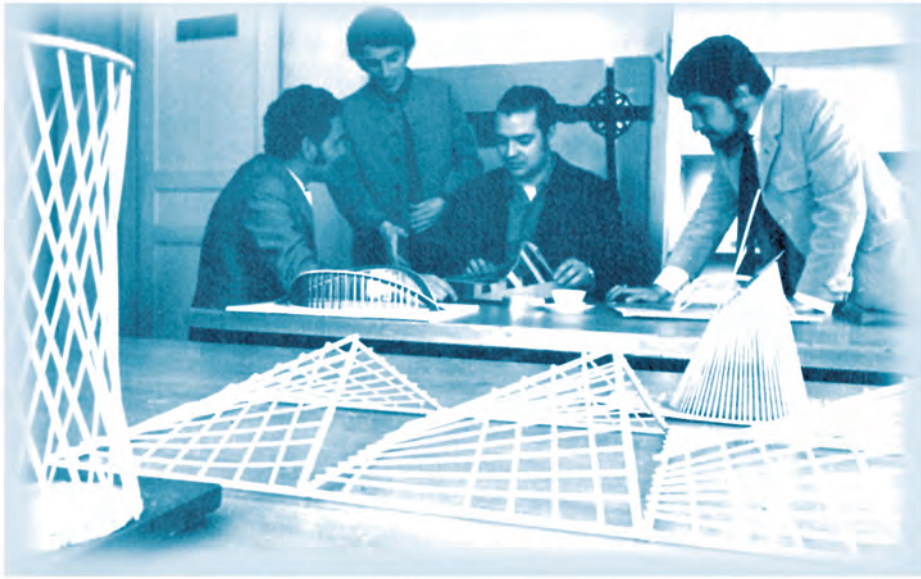
The students of the University of America chose to create a new university, which at the time took the name of *Universidad Piloto de Arquitectura*<sup>1</sup>:

This new University would begin activities with 130 students. There are also concrete plans regarding how the University should be, such as the elimination of the thesis, which would be replaced by a year of rural practice. Upon completion, the student will submit to the Government a complete study of the studied zone's urban and housing needs, along with a description of workforce options, type of housing, materials, etc.; this, with the purpose of establishing a real organization of housing facilities, at a national level. In addition to this, the new *Universidad Piloto de Arquitectura*, will request the cooperation of last-year students from other universities and different

IT IS A SCHOOL THAT  
**RESULTED**  
FROM THE STRUGGLE

1. Note from the translator: It roughly translates "Pilot University of Architecture", however with time, the name "Piloto" became the official proper name of the actual university, disregarding the colloquial meaning of trial that the word "pilot" may have.





programs – not only Architecture – so as to constitute multi-skilled working groups, which will implement similar plans for architects in the rest of the country. Also, it will attempt, from the very beginning of their career, to involve students in social projects, so that they may acquire a deeper knowledge of the necessities, as well as for the design practical courses within projects – from bricklaying to house planning –, such as those of the *Minuto de Dios*, *Instituto de Crédito Territorial*, among others.

*Memoires of the Founders of the UPC*

Surprisingly, merely a month after the creation of the new university, this group of students consolidated their reflection on how a future architect should be trained. It appears that after the Workshop sessions, with silent, inexpressive professors, and in the midst of drawing boards, T-square rulers, and set squares, these class fellows discussed and redesigned the vision of Architecture and its teaching method.

## THE DECISION

Testimonies and newspaper clippings of September 1962 report that 119 to 130 students flocked out onto the street with the intention of founding a new university. The National Park became the initial headquarters of this budding *Universidad Piloto de Arquitectura*.

Let us review some testimonies of the protagonists of this intellectual adventure, which, little by little, made its way through doubts, but also certainties and decisions inspired on the desire of breaking down walls and impediments:

We remember, especially, a meeting that lasted until late in the afternoon, the very day we decided

“Unknowningly, or perhaps, foreseeing it, Marta Traba became the first of many guardians the Piloto School would later have”

to walk out. Where to? To the National Park. That night we left the University of America and each one of us took our student ID card and threw it into the garbage can.

*Memoires of the Founders of the UPC*

The dice were cast: the students of Architecture had left the university, tossed away their student cards, and faced the commitment of creating a Faculty that would meet their hopes and expectations. But, how does one create a university? Where? And, what would it look like? Uncertainty overwhelmed their thoughts as the dream of what was possible invaded their whole being.

They met at the park the following day. They were not very sure of what they were going to do next, but they were inebriated with the wish of creating their own Faculty of Architecture. They all kept the daily morning routine of leaving home for class for their parents to see, but this time classes would take place in a different sort of classroom.

We met again in the National Park the next day. As we sat on the lawn naming commissions, it began to rain. Suddenly, a woman came out of the National Park Theater and invited us in, to get away from the rain. Once inside, she asked why we were there. She listened. After that, we continued discussing and establishing commissions... She observed, smiled, and listened to everything we said... That woman's name was Marta Traba.

*Memoires of the Founders of the UPC*





MANY OF US TOOK  
CHAIRS  
FROM OUR HOMES;  
WE ALSO MADE  
BLACKBOARDS.

ALL HANDS ON DECK

Unknowingly, or perhaps, foreseeing it, Marta Traba became the first of many guardians the Piloto School would later have. Moving from the National Park to the theater surely signified the definite resolution of a destiny.

The students then created commissions comprised of twelve persons: the amount that would fit in the cars that were available. Inspired in the style of the Middle Age universities, when sons of nobles and traders sought for tutors, these new students – of an idea rather than of a university – emulated that same gesture.

Neither nobles nor rich, they got on their modern carriages in search for those tutors who were willing to teach. They went to Germán Samper's office and explained to him their situation as former students of the University of America. Surprised and doubtful, he promised he would meet with them at his home later in the afternoon.

This uncertain appointment filled them with hope. They ran back to the park carrying this promise, eager to encourage their fellow students. "All is possible" – they might have thought – when, on the very same day that they had conjured their passions, they had a theater for headquarters and the endorsement of one of the top architects of those days.

### ALL HANDS ON DECK

The other commissions had their own tasks to fulfill: To search for a place to start classes in, for donations, furniture, and to approach congressmen and influential figures that would support their idea. One of the students offered a house on Calle 72 and Carrera 11, in front of the Porciúncula Church. Thanks to this contribution, the outlook became somewhat clearer. However, there were

still many things to determine: the resources; who would be teaching, so that they may proceed with their studies; and how to tell their families, because none of them had yet spoken with their parents.

Bearing in mind the fear some students had regarding their parents not providing them with financial support, the leaders of the movement decided that the new university would offer unconditional scholarships. Many continued with their daily routine of going out to study. Many abandoned the movement, while others sought for different options. In response to this, they convened a meeting with the parents to explain their reasons and lay out their proposals.

And it so happened. They met in the auditorium of the *Colegio Santo Tomás*. They told them the whole story and gave them their reasons. And, as a second signal reassured them they were headed on the right direction, the parents surprisingly offered their full support. One of the students even offered the five thousand pesos his father had given him for a study trip to Mexico, as his own contribution to the new university. Smaller amounts followed, along with a cascade of donations and a bounty of new ideas. In the face of this reward, the students decided to "burn the ships" in their attempt and not look back.

"They took advantage of the opportunity that confidence provides and did not lose track of their initial purpose: *to be trained as architects.*"





## INFRASTRUCTURE

With their families' support, a location to start with, and the movement's increasing strength, the different commissions continued to search for legal advice and support. They took advantage of the opportunity that confidence provides and did not derail from their initial purpose: to be trained as architects.

But, how could they begin classes without professors, desks or drawing boards? With their parents' approval, the students took from their homes whatever was available and furnished their headquarters. Some provided their own drawing boards and implements for the "Faculty". Books, notebooks, and even a Continental typewriter were also donated. Other students, with thin steel, wood, and other materials, made chairs, tables, blackboards, and even bookshelves for the library, while others were in charge of providing food and money.

We first spoke about academics, and we did so while taking class and sharing our opinions, practically sitting on the floor. That made us solve fundamental issues: Where are we going to sit? What blackboards? What chairs? We stayed on Calle 72 only for just a short time. We were in charge of paying the rent, and, at the beginning, we had





our parents' support for bus fares and books. The first thing we did was to build a library with some furniture. Many of us took chairs and wastebaskets from our homes; we also made blackboards. Acerías Paz del Río donated steel rods, and we all built a warehouse in the courtyard for two more classrooms. We even built our own cooperative. The money for bread and soft drinks was put into a small basket; we could all take money from it and we all helped out by putting back the exact change.

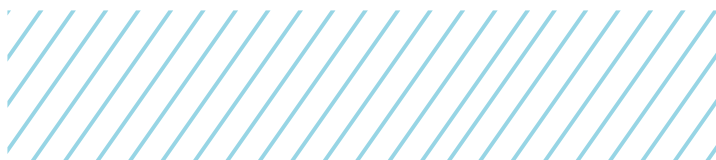
*Memoires of the Founders of the UPC*

The support of friends, parents, and of those professionals who were interested in participating in what had finally become an experiment in autonomy was crucial for the project's strength. Within a month of the beginning of this enterprise, the University had sixty professors,

mostly from the National University, who gave classes on a voluntary basis at their homes:

At the beginning, we had no money to pay the professors. In fact, many of them gave us money for soap and brooms when classes ended. We mainly had friends: architects, engineers, and mathematicians. We organized a study group. We recall Leonardo Ayala, Hernando Tapia, Gonzalo Casas, Luis Espinoza, Hernando Reyes, Humberto Flórez, "El Capi" Ariza, Jaime Vallecilla, Moreno, De Moya, Bernal, and many others... But most of them were fellow students from the advanced courses who, although had started the adventure with us and had decided to return to the University of America, continued to give us their support.

*Memoires of the Founders of the UPC*



## THE LEGAL UNIVERSITY

In the meantime, another group of fellow students sought for legal advice and guidance in order to acquire a formal support for the ongoing university. One of the contacts they managed to establish was with Senator Alfonso Palacio Rudas, who remained as President of the Corporation for thirty years. At the same time, they met with the attorney, Rafael Vaquero, who helped them with the legal incorporation of the University. He showed them the bylaws of the *Universidad Libre* as a corporate example of what they were seeking.

We based the new university's founding bylaws on those of the *Universidad Libre*; we studied and analyzed them, and we saw how they reflected what we wanted (...). We adapted and supplemented them and, to date, no substantial amendments have been made. These bylaws would be later signed at the Capitol.

*Memoires of the Founders of the UPC*

Definitely, the support of the then Senator of the Republic, Alfonso Palacio Rudas, was crucial because, through him, the students managed to have access to Congress, where the first assembly meeting took place and the bylaws were approved by one hundred student participants on September 14<sup>th</sup> of 1962. After this ritual, the university, conceived until then as the *Universidad Piloto de Arquitectura*, became the *Corporación Universidad Piloto de Colombia* ("Piloto University of Colombia Corporation"). The bylaws of the constituted university defined organizational, academic, and managerial guidelines and, once approved, its operational foundations were established. Then, the *Consiliatura* – supreme authority of the University Corporation, comprised of six professors and six

students – was constituted on October 22<sup>nd</sup> of that same year. Forty-four years after the Córdoba Manifesto, another Latin-American university paid heed to its libertarian recommendations: The students were both participants and protagonists of their own destiny.

Today, the Piloto University of Colombia Corporation, after 53 years of operations, has fifteen undergraduate programs, ten specialization courses, and three Master's Degree programs: Urban Management, Architecture, and Value Networks and Logistics Management. It has nine thousand students and more than twenty-seven thousand alumni.

Its students have received both national and international awards and honorable mentions in architectural biennials. In 2006, Tongji University (Shanghai) selected one of its degree projects as one of the best architectural proposals in the world.

*"At the beginning we had no money to pay the professors. In fact, many of them gave us money for soap and brooms when classes ended."*

## ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

### THE FOUR STAGES

The educational development of the Piloto University of Colombia has gone through four stages, all with the purpose of offering a high-quality higher education, linked



to the most relevant tendencies in the world and in agreement with our country's needs and expectations. The institution began its educational development as a School of Architecture, whose main purpose was, from the outset, to become this profession's best teaching center, always linked to Colombia's historical processes in the Latin American context.

The most important architects of Bogotá taught in this budding university from the very outset of its activities, in November 20<sup>th</sup> of 1963. Later, the most advanced students began to teach the younger generations. Little by little, this allowed for the multi-skilled teams – composed of professors and students, articulating theory with practice – to design a pedagogical teaching model by promoting each student's creativity, instilling social responsibility, and making and conceiving a notion of the city for our country, based on our own circumstances. As of this first stage, the responsibility toward the development of cities and regions became one of the most important institutional and professional objectives.

After fifteen years of operations, the Faculty of Architecture sought to continue making an impact on urban and regional development by adding two new professions that would complement the architect's vision. To this effect, and with the assistance of two prestigious universities, the Faculty of Systems Engineering – third of its kind in Colombia – was created, in 1977, with the purpose of creating a new model of engineering in the world, thus innovating the teaching of information

technologies. In this way, it became part of the second generation of engineering schools created in the world.

The Faculty of Economics was later founded in 1978, which enabled the contextualization of the country's development. This second stage of the university's educational development ends in 1981 with the creation of the Faculty of Public Accounting, which was needed to complement the Faculty of Economics, Accounting, and Financial Sciences, highly relevant during the eighties.

These three new faculties followed the footprints of the Faculty of Architecture; that is, they engaged in the solution of Colombia's most urgent problems. Highly suitable professionals were appointed as deans, along with teams of innovative and creative professors. Aside from growing through the professions that were relevant to the Piloto project, it was necessary to be coherent with the Colombian law enforced at the time – Decree 80 of 1980 – and to have programs in three areas of knowledge in order to obtain official recognition as University. The Ministry of Education finally granted it the status of *University* in 1986.

With the same spirit of innovation and pertinence with Latin America's needs, the university made then a strategic alliance with the *École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées* (National Advanced Civil Engineering School of Paris) and creates the Master's Degree Program in Urban Management in 1986, with the assistance of professors from France. It makes an impact on many cities' development plans and it actively participates in the development of Bogotá through the project known as *Fase Dos* (Phase Two).

The Sectional Branch of the Alto Magdalena is created in 1985, with the purpose of generating a high-quality education in that region and programs required for

“New programs linked to national and international trends are further created, such as Graphic Design, Spatial and Scenic Design, Mechatronics Engineering, and International Business.”





its development, in the areas of tourism and farming, such as Business Administration, Public Accounting, and Cycles Technologies.

The urban-regional development strengthened the University's processes in teaching, research, and extension during the three decades of its evolution. The third phase begins in the nineties, a decade marked by multiple new Japanese and North-American technologies, which made an impact on organizational development. For this reason, emphasis is placed in management, customer service, leadership, and organizations, all core aspects of public and private management. At that time, a new law on Higher Education comes into force: Law 30 of 1992. These circumstances paved the way toward the creation of a new Faculty – known at the time as the Faculty of Management and Marketing – with the launching of new academic programs in Organizational Management, in 1993; Entrepreneurial Psychology, in 1995; and Market Engineering, in 1995. Additionally, the specializations in the same areas of knowledge are also launched, namely:

Tax Management, Fiscal Auditing, Financial Management and Administration, and Project Management.

In addition to this, new third generation Engineering programs are created: Tele-informatics Engineering (today, Telecommunications), in 1996, and Financial Engineering, in that same year. The institution also launched its Civil Engineering Program, needed to establish a strong Faculty of Engineering and taking account of the need for engineers that would foster the country's productivity and creativity.

The fourth stage covers the first decade of this new century, mainly informed by national and international public policy and focused on quality and accreditation processes. Qualified registries were achieved for thirty-five undergraduate and post-graduate programs, both in Bogotá and Girardot. The Architecture Program obtained its high-quality accreditation in 2007, and it finally received its international accreditation from the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in 2009. New programs linked to national and international trends are further created, such as Graphic Design,





Spatial and Scenic Design, Mechatronics Engineering, and International Business. Likewise, the creation of new specializations is promoted: Information Technology Security, Human Management of Organizations. Also, virtual education is enhanced through the creation, in conjunction with the *Universidad Católica del Norte*, of the specialization in Management of Virtual Methodology Strategic Marketing.

As for research, it has advanced during the last decade by means of awareness-raising processes and the formation of research groups that have been recognized and categorized by Colciencias. The international workshops – strategically designed to promote the university's pedagogical and social intervention model – have become stronger and, to date, twenty-four have taken place in different parts of the world. The dual-degree programs have also advanced, after a process of curricular, pedagogical, managerial, and financial flexibility, which has enabled the homologation of courses and degrees with both national and international universities.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE

Today, fifty years after the birth of the institution and in line with its educational project, the University seeks to become pertinent to the new educational trends, to be coherent with a globalized world, and to follow the vision of becoming a world-class university. It plans to achieve a well-developed, high-level, post-graduate education that may strengthen scientific research, in cooperation with global academic and scientific networks that may allow for it to have access both to dual-degrees and to the mobility of students, faculty and alumni to any place in the planet. Another goal is to strengthen distance education with the use of the best of information and communication technologies and to structure and offer programs in social areas that may enhance those areas of knowledge that already exist at the university. Furthermore, it seeks to move across borders and offer academic programs that have been certified in other American and Spanish-speaking countries.

Finally, as a part of the University's social projection, the Sectional Branch of the Alto Magdalena – with its thirty years of experience and contribution to the region's development – currently presents great opportunities, with roads that favor mobility and its articulation with the capital city. Being Girardot the multimodal port that it is, with its climate of constant summer, it allows for the conditions that may make of this Piloto University branch a high-quality university, with both national and international professors and for students from diverse regions of the country and the world.





A photograph of an outdoor courtyard. In the background, a building with large windows and two flat-screen TVs is visible. The courtyard is filled with greenery, including a large fern in a white stand, various potted plants, and a large, dark, geometric sculpture made of metal plates with cutouts. In the foreground, there are more plants and a red path. The word "HISTORY" is overlaid in the bottom left corner.


**HISTORY**





## PILOTO UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBIA

Sectional Branch of the Alto Magdalena



In accordance with the policies of the Colombian State, the university decided to decentralize its educational services. To that end, the Honorable Board of Trustees authorized studies aimed at founding the seat.



1985

In June 1985, the project was submitted to ICFES for the approval and opening of a Sectional Branch of the Alto Magdalena, headquartered in Girardot, which was approved by Agreement 224 of December 5, 1985. It offered the following academic programs:

- » Systems Engineering, professional program
- » Business Management by Cycles, technical and professional program. The technical program includes:
  - Agricultural Business Management
  - Commercial Companies Management
  - Tourism and Hospitality Management


**1990–1992**

In 1991, the Public Accounting professional program and the Business Administration Professional Cycle were approved. During its early years, the Sectional Branch of the Alto Magdalena engaged in an autonomous process of consolidation of a “university culture”, through ongoing programs aimed at all levels of the seat regarding: Institutional belonging and identity; university integration; university participation in different programs, particularly participation of students in community service programs, not only in their degree projects, but also in academic practices; ongoing teacher participation seminars, human relations seminars to managing and administrative staff; meetings to discuss various topics and projects, and above all, encouraging and facilitating an ongoing debate on academic aspects and institutional development.


**1992–1994**

Later, in the years 1992-1994, the University's Sectional Branch of the Alto Magdalena carried out significant work, which required the creation of an interdisciplinary team, with dedication and belief, within a “participatory” action, with a philosophy of critical analysis and ongoing academic debate, and that established an open-system institution to address critical issues, as were the official approvals of all academic programs and the “approach to the community” program (University Outreach), which involved restructuring the entire institution.


**2000–2008**

The Civil Engineering program was established; compliance was achieved with the standard required by Decree 2566 of September 10, 2003, whereby the minimum quality conditions were set for the Public Accounting program, as well as three engineering programs of the Sectional Branch of the Alto Magdalena, all of which were granted Qualified Registry as follows:

- **Public Accounting**  
Qualified Registry Res. MOE 1814 of May 2, 2006.
- **Systems Engineering**  
Qualified Registry Res. MOE 3358 of December 22, 2003. Single schedule.
- **Civil Engineering**  
Qualified Registry Res. MOE 3359 of December 22, 2003. Single schedule.



**A PHILOSOPHY OF  
CRITICAL  
ANALYSIS  
AND ONGOING  
ACADEMIC DEBATE**

- **Financial Engineering**

ICFES Registry No.:182243326202530711100. Daytime schedule.

In 2008, two technical degrees were designed in the Systems Engineering program:

- **Computer Networking Technology**
- **Information Systems Development Technology**

In 2011, two new academic programs were approved

- **Environmental Management**  
Qualified Registry Res. MOE 9580 of October 25, 2011
- **Tourism and Hospitality Management**  
Qualified Registry Res. MOE 9585 of October 25, 2011
- **Logistics Management**  
Qualified Registry Res. MOE 6760 of October 25, 2011



